

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 PM-03
DODE-00 SP-02 PA-01 NSC-05 L-01 NEA-07 IO-06
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P 111458Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8353

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USINT HAVANA

USINT BAGHDAD

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 2132

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, ET, US

SUBJ: POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENT IN US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS

REF: (A) ADDIS ABABA 2113 (NOTAL);

(B) ADDIS ABABA 2114 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: DURING UNUSUALLY CORDIAL MEETING WITH ETHIOPIAN
FOREIGN MINISTER COL. DR. FELEKE GEDLE-GHIORGIS ON MAY 10,
HE STATED THAT US HAS ROLE TO PLAY IN ERITREA (BY INFLU-
ENCING ARABS), THAT ETHIOPIAN GOVT (PMGSE) HAD GRANTED
AGREEMENT FOR NEW US AMBASSADOR, AND THAT ETHIOPIA WOULD
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NOT BE STOOGE OF ANYONE. I HAD OPENED MEETING WITH REVIEW
OF BILATERAL RELATIONS SINCE SPECIAL PRESIDENTIAL EMISSARY'S
VISIT, INCLUDING MOST OF THOSE ADVERSE ACTIONS BY PMGSE,
WHICH WERE HAVING NEGATIVE IMPACT ON BILATERAL RELA-
TIONS, ESPECIALLY FALSE ACCUSATIONS ABOUT AMERICA'S
PLOTING WITH SOMALIA AGAINST DJIBOUTI, US "BLOCKADE"
OF CUBA, DIRG SEC GEN'S DIATRIBE IN VICTORY DAY

SPEECH ABOUT CONDITIONS IN US, AND RECALL OF FORMER POLCOUNS MALIN. WE ALSO DISCUSSED US WILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE ECONOMIC ASSISTNACE, ETHIOPIA'S APPARENT RELUCTANCE TO ACCEPT IT, AND I RAISED POSSIBILITY OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS OFFICER BE ADDED TO EMBASSY STAFF. OPENING MAY HAVE BEEN CREATED FOR SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVED RELATIONS IN FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

1. ETHIOPIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MOFA) AMERICAS DIVISION DIRECTOR BERHANE DERESSE INFORMED ME MORNING MAY 10 THAT FONMIN FELEKE HAD FINALLY GRANTED MY LONGSTANDING REQUEST FOR AN APPOINTMENT TO HAVE GENERAL REVIEW OF RELATIONS AND HINTED THERE WOULD BE GOOD NEWS. I BEGAN LATE AFTERNOON MEETING WITH FELEKE BY REVIEWING DEVELOPMENTS IN US-ETHIOPIAN BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP SINCE FEBRUARY VISIT OF SPECIAL PRESIDENTIAL EMISSARY AARON. I RECALLED UNDERSTANDING I THOUGHT HAD BEEN REACHED DURING AARON MISSION THAT THERE SHOULD BE GREATER CONSULTATION BETWEEN TWO GOVTS, ADDING THAT, FOR EXAMPLE, TOTALLY FLALSE AND UNFORTUNATE ETHIOPIAN ACCUSATIONS AGAINST US OF PLOTTING WITH SOMALIA TO ARRANGE ANNEXATION OF DJIBOUTI COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED IF PMGSE HAD RAISED ISSUE IN PRIVATE. I EXPRESSED HOPE THAT PMGSE HAD BEEN REASSURED BY SUBSEQUENT US PROTESTS AND STATEMENTS, AS WELL AS ACTIONS, THAT US IS NOT AND WILL NOT ENCOURAGE ANY EROSION OF CONFIDENTIAL

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DJIBOUTI'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OR INDEPENDENCE.

2. I THEN NOTED CHARGE IN MARCH 21 ETHIO-CUBAN JOINT COMMUNIQUE THAT US HAD IMPOSED "CRIMINAL BLOCKADE" ON CUBA. THERE WAS NO TRUTH TO THIS CHARGE, I CONTINUED, AND IT WAS NOT HELPFUL TO IMPROVING US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS. I EXPLAINED THERE WAS A US TRADE EMBARGO ON CUBA, WHICH WAS BEING LIBERALIZED, BUT NO ATTEMPT WAS BEING MADE TO BLOCKADE TRADE OF OTHER COUNTRIES WITH CUBA, AND US IS WORKING TOWARDS BETTER ECONOMIC AS WELL AS POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH THAT COUNTRY.

3. NEXT I TOOK UMBRAGE AT DIRG SEC GEN FIKRE-SELASSIE'S VICTORY DAY SPEECH (APRIL 6) IN WHICH HE DISTORTED US INTERNAL CONDITIONS, SPECIFICALLY ACCUSING USG OF MAS-SACRING ITS MINORITIES. US REALIZES IT HAS FAR TO GO IN ACHIEVING PERFECT SOCIAL JUSTICE. BUT HIS CLAIMS WERE UNREAL AND MUST HAVE BEEN DRAFTED BY SOMEONE WHO IS WORKING AGAINST IMPROVED RELATIONS. REMARKS SUCH AS THESE WERE UNCALLED FOR AND CREATED APPREHENSIONS IN US ABOUT PMGSE ATTITUDES AT HIGHEST LEVELS TOWARD US. I REMINDED HIM IN GENERAL OF SOME OF INTERNAL

AND PLURALISTIC INFLUENCES ON PRESIDENT CARTER IN FORMULATING POLICY, NOTING THAT DISPARAGING AND UNTRUE STATEMENTS LIKE SECGEN'S CONTRIBUTED TO BLOCKING IMPROVEMENT IN BILATERAL RELATIONS, WHICH I WAS CONFIDENT MOST PEOPLE IN BOTH COUNTRIES DESIRED. PRESIDENT CARTER CERTAINLY DID.

4. REMARKING THAT US BELIEVES IT DOES HAVE FRIENDS WITHIN PMGSE WHO ARE WORKING TOWARD THIS GOAL, I STATED IT IS ALSO TRUE THERE SEEM TO BE ENEMIES IN HIGH CIRCLES WHO CONTINUE TO STRIVE AGAINST THIS. SUCH A CASE WAS THE UNJUSTIFIED RECALL OF FORMER POLCOUNS MALIN. I VOICED STRONG PROTEST THAT MALIN RECALL WAS TOTALLY UNFOUNDED, BUT THAT US HAD AC-

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CEPTED IT WITHOUT MAKING IT PUBLIC ISSUE OR THORN IN OVERALL BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP BECAUSE OF IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO IMPROVEMENT IN OUR RELATIONS.

5. IN EFFORT TO HIGHLIGHT POSITIVE ASPECT OF RELATIONS DESPITE STRAINS OVER PAST YEAR, I RECOUNTED US EFFORTS TO PROVIDE ECONOMIC AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA. I NOTED \$2 MILLION CONTRIBUTION TO UN TRUCK FUND, 20 PER CENT CONTRIBUTION TO UNHCR APPEAL FOR OGADEN, RESPONSE TO APPEALS TO ALLEVIATE FAMINE AND DREAD ERGOTISM DISEASE IN WOLLO, AS WELL AS US WILLINGNESS AND PREPAREDNESS TO HELP MEET ETHIOPIA'S DEVELOPMENT NEEDS. HOWEVER, I ADDED, AT TIMES US IS MADE TO WONDER AT ETHIOPIA'S DESIRE TO WELCOME US ASSOCIATION WITH PMGSE'S OWN DEVELOPMENT GOALS BECAUSE OF ENDLESS DELAYS IN SIGNING BILATERAL PROJECTS SUCH AS UPPER DIDESSA.

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6. I CLOSED MY PRESENTATION BY ASSURING FONMIN US IS NOT ATTEMPTING TO HARM ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION AND THAT WE DESIRE TO IMPROVE OUR RELATIONS. VISITS SUCH AS THOSE BY CONGRESSMEN BONKER AND TSONGAS AND BY EMISSARY AARON HAD BEEN HELPFUL IN WORKING TOWARD THIS GOAL. GREATER DIALOGUE IN FUTURE, MUTUAL RESPECT AND CONFIDENCE IN EACH OTHER WOULD ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO THIS AIM.

7. FONMIN RESPONDED IN EXTREMELY RELAXED AND ALMOST CASUAL MANNER. HE MADE MAINLY PRO FORMA RESPONSE TO MY REMARKS, HE CHARACTERIZED OGADEN WAS AS "JIHAD" AND GAVE EXAMPLES TO SUPPORT HIS CONTENTION. HE REITERATED CONFIDENTIAL

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OLD THEME OF HOW ETHIOPIAN MASSES AND GOVT COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY US HAD ABANDONED OLD FRIEND ETHIOPIA IN HOUR OF GREATEST NEED. HE FAVORABLE NOTED ALMOST COMPLETE CESSATION OF "ANTI-ETHIOPIAN ARTICLES" IN US AND OTHER WESTERN MEDIA DURING PAST 3-4 WEEKS. PMGSE DID NOT WANT TO RESPOND TO PRESS ARTICLES OR STATE DEPT SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENTS, BUT IT FELT OBLIGED TO COMMENT ON PRES. CARTER'S REMARKS WHEN THEY CONCERNED ETHIOPIA. PMGSE HAS ATTEMPTED TO AVOID ALL PERSONAL ATTACKS ON PRESIDENT AS AGREED TO DURING AARON VISIT, BUT WAS COMPELLED TO REACT TO PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT ON ERITREA IN LAGOS. ON MALIN, FONMIN HOPED US WOULD MAKE "POSITIVE ASSESSMENT" OF PMGSE'S ACTION IN EXCLUDING ANY PUBLICITY AND NOT CAUSING EMBARRASSMENT TO MALIN OR USG. ONCE DECISION WAS MADE, HE CLAIMED, MOFA ATTEMPTED TO LIMIT ANY DAMAGE TO BILATERAL

RELATIONSHIP.

8. FONMIN THEN BEGAN OWN PRESENTATION, EXPRESSING BELIEF RELATIONS WOULD IMPROVE IN FUTURE, ALTHOUGH PROBABLY STILL SUBJECT TO CERTAIN UPS AND DOWNS. IN SUPPORT OF THIS HE INFORMED ME OFFICIALLY THAT AGREEMENT HAD BEEN GRANTED FOR NEW US AMBASSADOR TO ETHIOPIA. HE SAID HE HAD INDEED RECEIVED MESSAGE FROM AMB YOUNG THROUGH KENYAN FONMIN WAIYAKI URGING AGREEMENT. HE CONTINUED THAT "US HAS ROLE TO PLAY IN ETHIOPIA, TO ASSIST HER IN ERITREA." (IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION, HE SAID US COULD USE ITS INFLUENCE WITH ARAB FRIENDS NOT TO ARM ERITREAN INSURGENTS.) " ETHIOPIA IS AN INDEPENDENT AND SOVEREIGN COUNTRY AND WILL NOT BE STOOGE OF ANYONE. WE ARE A COUNTRY WHICH VALUES OUR TRADITIONS AND OUR INDEPENDENCE." HE RECALLED THAT EVEN WHEN US HAD SUCH CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH FORMER EMPEROR, EMPEROR STILL CONFIDENTIAL

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MAINTAINED GOOD RELATIONS WITH SOVIET UNION AND EVEN VISITED USSR IN 1958. HE ALSO CITED CHAIRMAN MENGISTU'S REMARKS TO AARON DELEGATION ABOUT ETHIOPIA'S DESIRE TO RETAIN ITS INDEPENDENCE OF ACTION. FONMIN GRACIOUSLY CONCLUDED HIS REMARKS BY PRAISING MY "OBJECTIVE REPORTING" OF SITUATION SINCE ARRIVAL. HE KNEW, HE SAID, THAT I HAD BEEN WORKING HARD FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS.

9. I ACCEPTED AGREEMENT FOR AMBASSADOR AS POSITIVE INDICATION OF ETHIOPIA'S DESIRE FOR GOOD RELATIONS. LATER, I ASKED IF ETHIOPIA WOULD BE NOMINATING A NEW AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON. CHARGE IN WASHINGTON WAS, I UNDERSTOOD, STRIVING FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS IN MEANTIME. FONMIN DID NOT RESPOND EITHER WAY. I SUGGESTED ONCE AGAIN FAVORABLE PMGSE ACTION WHICH WOULD PERMIT US TO CONTRIBUTE TO ACHIEVEMENT COUNTRY'S WON ECON DEVELOPMENT GOALS, AND FONMIN APPEARED TO TAKE SOME INTEREST IN PURSUING THIS WITHIN ETHIOPIAN BUREAUCRACY. (IN ANY EVENT, THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE AND APPARENTLY SYMPATHETIC DISCUSSION IN AMHARIC WITH MOFA AMERICAS DIVISION HEAD BERHANE DERESSE ON SUBJECT.) I RAISED POSSIBILITY THAT PMGSE MIGHT AUTHORIZE ONE ADDITIONAL OFFICER FOR EMBASSY, PERHAPS ON A 6-MONTH-ONE-YEAR TRIAL BASIS TO ADMINISTER COMMUNICATIONS AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS PROGRAM, INCLUDING JFK LIBRARY AT ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY. (POSSIBILITY OF SMALL PROGRAM CAME UP FIRST DURING POST/HENZE VISIT IN SEPT AND AGAIN WHILE AARON WAS VISITING LIBRARY IN FEBRUARY.) FONMIN SAID HE WOULD THINK ABOUT THIS POSSIBILITY. IDEA WAS OBVIOUSLY NEW TO HIM AND I DO NOT EXPECT HE

WILL FOLLOW THROUGH, BUT AT LEAST HE WAS NOT NEGATIVE
AND SUBJECT CAN BE RAISED AGAIN.

10. FONMIN SAID HE WOULD LEAD DELEGATION TO UN SSOD
IN NEW YORK AND WOULD APPRECIATE MEETING WITH US OFFI-
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CIALS, INCLUDING SECY VANCE AND AMB YOUNG AS REPORTED
REFTEL (A). WE CONCLUDED MEETING ON RELAXED AND
FRIENDLY NOTE, WITH ZANU LEADER MUGABE WAITING TO SEE
FONMIN. ALTHOUGH MINISTER KNEW MUGABE WAS IN ANTE-
ROOM, HE SEEMED IN NO HURRY TO END OUR CONVERSATION.

11. ENTIRE TENOR AND MOOD OF MEETING WAS MOST FRIENDLY
SINCE MY ARRIVAL IN OCTOBER 77. IT APPEARED THAT
BOTH FONMIN AND BERHANE DERESSE WERE GENUINELY HAPPY
THAT THEY HAD GOOD NEWS TO COMMUNICATE TO USG AND WERE
MILDLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT OUR FUTURE RELATIONS. SIGNIFI-
CANCE OF FONMIN'S REMARKS ON US ROLE IN ETHIOPIA AND
BERHANE'S PARTING COMMENTS TO ME ABOUT PENDULUM SWING-
ING BACK ARE ENCOURAGEING, BUT NOT YET SUPPORTED BY BROADER
ACTIONS OR ANY PERCEPTIBLE CHANGE IN FOREIGN
POLICY ORIENTATION. ANALYTICAL THOUGHTS TO FOLLOW BY
SEPTTEL. HOWEVER, MORALE OF ENTIRE STAFF IS BUOYED
LIKE IN WASHINGTON ON WARM SPRING DAY IN FEBRUARY.
MATHERON

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